

REMARKS

Reconsideration and allowance of the subject application are respectfully solicited.

Claims 1 through 26 are pending, with Claims 1 and 16 being independent. Claims 1, 2, 9, 16, 17, and 20 have been amended.

Claims 1 through 26 were variously rejected under 35 U.S.C. §§ 102 and 103 over U.S. Patent No. 4,994,843 (Kitazawa), taken alone or in view of U.S. Patent Nos. 5,404,152 (Nagai), 4,520,240 (Swindler), 5,138,260 (Molyneaux, et al.), and 5,895,130 (Saito, et al.). Claims 1 through 26 were also variously rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103 over Figs. 15A through 15C of the subject specification in view U.S. Patent No. 5,365,302 (Kodama), or various combinations of Kodama, Saito, et al., and U.S. Patent Nos. 5,684,627 (Ganser, et al.) and 5,392,088 (Abe, et al.). All rejections are respectfully traversed.

Claim 1 recites, inter alia, (a) generating a focus map and grouping the divided areas of the sensed image into object areas based on the generated focus map, in combination with (b) determining whether or not an operation for changing the main object area has been performed by a user using an operation member during a period after the focus controller has focused on the current main object area and before the image sensed by the image sensor has been captured and wherein a focus condition set by the focus controller on the determined main object area is maintained during this period until it has been determined that the operation member has been operated to set as a new main object area one of the object areas and then causes the focus controller to focus on the new main object area.

Claim 16 recites, inter alia, (a) generating a focus map and grouping the divided areas of the sensed image into object areas based on the generated focus map, in combination

with (b) detecting whether or not an operation for changing the main object area has been performed by a user using an operation member during a period after the first focus control step of focusing on the determined main object area and before the image sensed by the image sensor has been captured and wherein a focus condition on the determined main object area is maintained during this period until it has been determined that the operation has been operated, with changing to focus on the new main object area when the main object area is changed.

However, Applicants respectfully submit that none of Kitazawa, Nagai, Swindler, Molyneaux, et al., Saito, et al., Ganser, et al., Kodama, and Abe, et al., even in the proposed combinations, assuming, arguendo, that such could be combined, discloses or suggests at least the above-discussed combinations of claimed features as recited, inter alia, in Claims 1 and 16.

Applicants respectfully note that Kitazawa shows, e.g., an object distance measuring area selecting switch 42; however, Applicants respectfully submit that such provides neither a description nor a suggestion of at least the above-discussed claimed combinations of claimed features.

The Official Action relies upon UP/DOWN dial 36 of Saito, et al. Applicants respectfully submit that said dial is for increasing or decreasing the value of object distance, and provides neither a description nor a suggestion of the above-discussed claimed features, including the operation member and changing the object area.

Also, the Official Action acknowledges that 15A through 15C are silent as to changing the object area, and therefore relies upon col. 1, lines 24 through 34 of Kodama. However, Applicants respectfully submit that neither the foregoing portion of Kodama, which states, inter alia, “it has become important to facilitate the manual setting operation required for setting the focus area at the desired location by the user”, nor the remainder of Kodama provides